

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2951

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 0759

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, NG CABINET

SUBJECT: ANALYSIS OF SHIFTS IN NIGER

REF: NIAMEY 741, NIAMEY 736

1. BEGIN SUMMARY-

CABINET CHANGES ANNOUNCED FEB 21 BRING A NUMBER OF CIVILIANS INTO MINISTERIALS POSTS FOR FIRST TIME SINCE 1974 COUP; CIVILIANS NOW OUTNUMBER MILITARY 9 TO 7. HOWEVERN KEY LEVERS OF POWER REMAIN CONCENTRATED IN MILITARY HANDS, WITH MAJOR IDRISSE AROUNA GIB GAINER AND NOW PRETTY CLEARLY KEY FIGURE IN REGIME AFTER KOUNTCHE HIMSELF. END SUMMARY

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2. A MAJOR CABINET SHAKE UP WAS ANNOUNCED FEBRUARY 21, REDUCING THE RANKS OF MILITARY MINISTERS BY TWO AND ELEVATING A

NUMBER OF CIVILIANS TO CABINET STATUS. ONLY REAL VICTIM WAS MINISTER OF RURAL ECONOMY MOUSSA BAYERE (SEE NIAMEY 736) WHO WAS DROPPED OUTRIGHT, ALONG WITH MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND PTT COL. YACOUBA DUPUIS, WHO HAS LONG SEEMED ANXIOUS TO RETIRE. NO NEW FIGURES FROM ARMY WERE ADDED TO GOVERNMENT; ALL NEW FACES ARE CIVILIANS. SOME OF THESE -- MOUNKEILA AT MINES, ALFIDJA AT ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, ANNOU AT PLANNING (NAME CHANGED FROM DEVELOPMENT), AND SIDIKOU GARBA AT YOUTH AND SPORTS -- IN STEPPING UP TO CABINET POSTS WILL EXERCISE MUCH THE SAME FUNCTIONS THEY HAVE PERFORMED IN PAST AS SECRETARIES OF STATE OR ACTING HEADS OF THE MINISTERIES CONCERNED. THE REAL NEWCOMERS ARE FOUR: AOUAMI AT JUSTICE, MOUSSA BAKA AT PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORT AND BRAH MAMANE AND DIOLLO AS SECRETARIES OF STATE FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND FOR INFORMATION.

3. PRESS AND RADIO ARE STRESSING THE NEW PREPONDERANCE OF CIVILIANS IN CABINET. THIS MORNING'S SAHEL EDITORIAL, ENTITLED "THE TIME OF THE CIVILIANS," NOTES THAT KOUNTCHE IS TAKING TAENT WHERE HE CAN FIND IT AND RECALLS HIS 1974 PLEDGE TO PICK ASSOCIATES WITHOUT REGARD TO "POLITICAL, ETHNIC OR SENTIMENTAL" CONSIDERATIONS. NEWCOMERS, SAY SAHEL, ARE TECHNICIANS WHO HAVE WON THEIR SPURS BY HARD WORK UNDER MILITARY REGIME. NOW THEY ARE MOVING INTO PLACES RIGHTLY DESERVED.

4. BACKGROUND OF CHANGES SEEMS TO BEAR OUT THEORY THAT EFFICIENCY AND SEARCH FOR A TEAM THAT CAN GET THINGS DONE WERE CONSIDERATIONS FOREMOST IN KOUNTCHE'S MIND. DESPITE EXCLUSIVELY MILITARY COMPOSITION OF OLD CABINET, KOUNTCHE HAS IN FACT BEEN LEANING INCREASINGLY ON CIVILIANS, ESPECIALLY IN DEVELOPMENT, ORGANIZATION, AND PLANNING FOR A LONG TIME. RECENT SHIFTS THUS LARGELY FORMALIZE WHAT HAS COME TO BE KOUNTCHE'S PREFERRED OPERATING STYLE. HIS SPECIFIC PROBLEM WITH MOUSSA BAYERE (SEE NIAMEY 736) PLUS PRESUMED ADVANTAGES OF HAVING NEW TEAM IN PLACE WELL BEFORE SECOND COUP ANNIVERSARY IN APRIL, SEEM TO HAVE ARGUED FOR IMPLEMENTING THE CHANGES NOW.

5. WE BELIEVE DECISION WILL PROVE POPULAR ENOUGH AND BE SEEN AS A RESPONSIBLE EFFORT AT IMPROVEMENT AND REFLECT WELL BOTH
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ON KOUNTCHE AND THE MILITARY AS A WHOLE IN THEIR ROLES AS CUSTODIANS OF THE NATION DURING A DIFFICULT PERIOD. IMPORTANT AS SUCH COSMETIC EFFECT MAY BE, HOWEVER, POWER STAYS VESTED IN THE SMALL GROUP OF MILITARY FIGURES WHO HAVE BEEN CALLING THE SHOTS SINCE APRIL 1974, MOST IMPORTANT BESIDES KOUNTCHE BEING IDRISSE AROUNA, SORY MAMADOU DIALIO, PLUS CHIEF OF STAFF ALI CHAIBOU.

6. TWO SLIGHT SURPRISES ARE KOUNTCHE'S RELINQUISHMENT OF THE DEFENSE PORTFOLIO AND HIS DROPPING THE TITLE OF INTERIOR

MINISTER, ALTHOUGH THE "PRESIDENCY" WILL CONTINUE TO RUN INTERIOR THROUGH A "MINISTER DELEGATE". IDRISSE AROUNA'S DESIGNATION TO DEFENSE CLEARLY MARKS HIM AS A LINCHPIN OF THE SMC AND ACCORDS HIM UNUSUAL STATUS OF MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE AND MINISTER OF NATIONAL EDUCATION. THERE CAN NOT BE MANY COUNTRIES WHERE ONE MAN IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE TWO PORTFOLIOS.

7. IN A COUNTRY WITH HAUSE MAJORITY CABINET REMAINS PRE-DOMINATELY DJERMA, ONLY HAUSE MEMBER BEING ANNOU OF PLANNING MINISTRY AND MOUSSA BAKO OF PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORT.

8. FROM POINT OF VIEW OF WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT, COUNTRIES AND COMPANIES INVOLVED IN MINERALS BUSINESS WILL FIND NEW MINISTER OF MINES MOUJEILA DIFFICULT BUREAUCRAT WITH WHOM TO DEFY. ON OTHER HAND MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (FORMER MINISTRY OF RURAL ECONOMY) WITH WHICH WE HAVE NUMBER OF IMPORTANT PROJECTS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN GIVEN ADDED RESPONSIBILITY IN DEVELOPMENT FIELD. REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW BOULAMA MANGA NEW MINISTER, WILL HANDLE THESE RESPONSIBILITIES, BUT WE ARE ENCOURAGED BY NAMING OF BRAH MAMANE FORMER UNCC DIRECTOR TO POST OF SECRETARY OF STATE FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT. HECK

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